

both majority and minority leadership. During the early 2000s, Dennis spent four years as Majority Leader and the last 16 years as Minority Leader.

Throughout his tenure, Dennis vowed to keep the Niagara County Legislature transparent and honest. When he first ran for office, he promised that he would never vote for a property tax increase. Thirty years later, Dennis has kept this promise.

Dennis sponsored several resolutions during his time on the Niagara County Legislature. Most notable was a resolution, that passed, allowing Niagara County residents to speak before the Legislature; previous policy did not allow residents to have a voice. He also sponsored a resolution that put in place an Animal Abuse Registry that requires registration for anyone convicted of animal cruelty. The registry now serves as a model for the rest of New York State. Additionally, Dennis sponsored resolutions to reserve parking spaces for Purple Heart recipients.

Of his many accomplishments, Dennis is most proud of his speech before Congress in the late 1970s. At the time, he was the president of United States Steel Workers of America Local 12256. Dennis's testimony led to immediate action by President Jimmy Carter ordering NIOSH and OSHA to help the 500 employees at the Hyde Park/Bloody Run Landfill in Niagara Falls who were suffering from cancer and blood-related diseases due to chemical exposure. The workers were able to obtain necessary medical testing and landfill was subsequently closed.

While serving as County Legislator, Dennis also worked full-time as a Niagara Falls building inspector, eventually becoming the city's director of inspections. His true passion though, is working for the people of Niagara County.

Dennis is the son of Carmella and the late Armand Virtuoso, a two-time Purple Heart recipient and World War II veteran. He and his wife, Gina Virtuoso, have two sons and a daughter. Dennis is a Navy Seal, Vincent works at the Niagara Falls Water Plant, and Gina is a nurse.

Dennis is passionate work over the past 30 years gave the people of Niagara County a voice in government. Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to recognize Legislator Dennis Virtuoso's well-deserved retirement from the Niagara County Legislature. I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking Dennis for his leadership and service.

IN RECOGNITION OF OCTAVIO
"CHATO" VILLALOBOS

HON. EMANUEL CLEAVER

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 10, 2021

Mr. CLEAVER. Madam Speaker, it is with a deep sense of gratitude and admiration that I rise today to celebrate Kansas City Police Officer Octavio "Chato" Villalobos. The son of Mexican immigrants, Chato has made it his life's mission to serve and protect the people of Kansas City, Missouri while working tirelessly to ensure that communities of color are treated fairly and justly by our country's criminal justice system. In light of the protests that swept across our nation last summer, it is per-

haps more important than ever before to recognize police officers like Chato, whose selfless service is rooted in love and compassion for the people he protects.

Born in Torrance, California and raised in Kansas City, Missouri, Chato takes great pride in belonging to Kansas City's thriving Mexican-American community. Known by others for his thoughtful nature, Chato has always understood that identifying as a Mexican-American police officer comes not only with immense pride, but with a profound sense of purpose and responsibility as well. Communities of color, including the Latino community, have faced racism, prejudice, and discrimination here in the United States for generations, and the injustices to which the Chicano community has been subjected are far too many to count. Chato knows this history well, but rather than letting it discourage him or dampen his spirits, he has used it as a constant source of motivation to make Kansas City a better place to call home, regardless of one's skin color or national origin.

Treating others the way he wishes to be treated, Chato has made significant strides towards building trust between Kansas City's police department and the Latino community it serves. Having worn the blue uniform for many years now, Chato understands that simply offering dignity and respect to the faces he meets while on patrol goes a long way toward creating a safer city where all people are treated fairly under the law. While negative stories capture headlines and screen time, Chato has lent a helping hand to the people of Kansas City any time the opportunity has arisen ever since the first time he donned the badge, and his compassionate nature has made him beloved throughout the city.

Beyond his work as a police officer, Chato has served as a mentor to boys on the path to manhood, instilling values into our young people that will ensure their success down the road. Chato has advocated passionately on behalf of DACA, and regularly volunteers with organizations aimed at uplifting the Latino community. A committed father, Chato makes sure to teach his children about their Mexican heritage by taking them to local Chicano and Latino art festivals and celebrations, believing firmly that appreciating one's genealogy helps build a sense of personal identity while giving us the strength to face the challenges of life. And in May of 2016, Chato's heartfelt poem "Brown Eyes in Blues" was read aloud to an audience in Kansas City by Juan Felipe Herrera, our nation's first Latino Poet Laureate.

Madam Speaker, the impact that Octavio "Chato" Villalobos has made on the Kansas City community is greater than any speech of mine can encapsulate. As we enter Hispanic Heritage Month, let us take time to recognize public servants like Chato who work every day to make sure the United States is living up to its founding principles of liberty and justice for all.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF THE
13 U.S. TROOPS WHO GAVE THEIR
LIVES HELPING OTHERS TO
FREEDOM

HON. DARRELL ISSA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 10, 2021

Mr. ISSA. Madam Speaker, on Thursday, August 26, 2021, as the U.S. military was working to airlift thousands out of Afghanistan amid chaos at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, terrorists murdered more than 180 people including 13 members of the U.S. military there to assist American citizens seeking to come home.

Ten of those 13 U.S. troops were from a single unit at Camp Pendleton in San Diego County, just outside my district. Nine of them were Marines, part of the 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment. The tenth was a Navy corpsman attached to that unit. Their stories are now part of the long and valiant history of Camp Pendleton and the 2/1 battalion, known as "The Professionals."

The battalion saw combat at Guadalcanal and Okinawa in World War II and fought in Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq as well. It helped run a temporary shelter at Camp Pendleton for thousands of Vietnamese refugees following the fall of Saigon in 1975.

In the days since the devastating news of last week's terrorist attack, the local community has embraced the families whose loved ones paid the ultimate price, creating a memorial of flowers and American flags outside Camp Pendleton's main gate in Oceanside.

Five of the marines were only 20 years old, and all but one were under 25. Four were from California.

They died doing an honorable job in an honorable way. As the official Pentagon announcement described it, they were "supporting non-combatant evacuation operations." In other words, they were helping innocent civilians make it home safely.

In devotion to their country, they were willing to risk their own homecoming to secure a safe homecoming for others. That's selfless service. That's a meaningful life. Their families can be proud of how they lived their brief lives.

While words seem powerless to ease the grief of loved ones suffering such a profound loss, I pray that their families can find some small comfort that a grateful nation honors the service and mourns the loss of these American heroes:

Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Darin T. Hoover: 31, of Salt Lake City, Utah.

Marine Corps Sgt. Johanny Rosario Pichardo: 25, of Lawrence, Massachusetts. Marine Corps Sgt. Nicole L. Gee: 23, of Sacramento, California.

Marine Corps Cpl. Hunter Lopez: 22, of Indio, California.

Marine Corps Cpl. Daegan W. Page: 23, of Omaha, Nebraska.

Marine Corps Cpl. Humberto A. Sanchez: 22, of Logansport, Indiana.

Marine Corps Lance Cpl. David L. Espinoza: 20, of Rio Bravo, Texas.

Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Jared M. Schmitz: 20, of St. Charles, Missouri.

Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Rylee J. Mccollum: 20, of Jackson, Wyoming.